

THE GRAPEVINE

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Dear Friends,

Everything came early this year: strawberries, peaches, watermelon, even the back-to-school ads. Halloween will be here before you know it, and after that we'll see you when you're thinking about a Christmas tree. I wonder if the latest scientific research bears out my theory that time is moving at an accelerated pace?

That pace slows down a little this month. Worlds collide in September. Summer and fall jostle each other to see which season comes out on top. The tomatoes and watermelons duke it out with the apples and squash, but they shouldn't fight, because September accommodates all things summer and all things fall; it's a delicious month.

Already, we have new crop, Washington grown Honeycrisp and Fuji apples joining the new crop Gala. "New crop" used to be a very big catchphrase among consumers, back when storage methods didn't allow for crispy local apples year 'round, and we weren't such enthusiastic trading partners with the New Zealand apple growers, whose seasons mesh perfectly with our needs.

This month we'll have Red and Golden Delicious and Granny Smith apples. Cameos and Cripps Pink (Pink Lady) arrive late September/early October, and Braeburn in October. Add summer's Galas to the mix, and those are the top 9 varieties commercially grown in Washington.

It's a funny thing that the most common question we're asked this month is impossible to answer: "What's the best apple?" If you ask me that question, I'll have to ask a couple questions right back at you: do you like sweet or tart apples? Are you making pie or sauce, or just want a snack? Tell us what you like, and we'll help you discover your "best" apple! They're all good!

Have you heard of the acronym FOMO? I asked around; the young people I know weren't familiar with it. Turns out it stands for "fear of missing out," and it makes me a little sad for the people using it, who so far, seem to be folks in their 30s—except when I recognized the same thing in myself the other day. At the checkout I was bagging for a customer who had some "old crop" apples in his basket. I slipped a new crop Gala into his bag and said, "I didn't want you to miss out on what new crop apple season means!"

Don't miss out on the special delights of fall! New crop apples are a big one, along with pears of all kinds: the venerable Bartlett, the gorgeous Starkrimson, D'Anjou, Forelle, Bosc and Comice. They're all unique, and with the exception of the Starkrimson which has only been around since the 1950s, they're heirloom varieties, hundreds of years old. Bartletts are the most popular for canning, but you can certainly can or cook with your favorite. I swap pears for apples in crisps, pie and salads, and firm pears like Bosc are a classic accompaniment to a cheese course.

Fall squash season is upon us, and we'll have all your favorites over the course of September and October. I have a sense that the popularity of Butternut squash is being challenged by Delicata, which some people like because you can eat the skin, too. I'm sure that eating the skin provides more fiber in addition to the vitamins A and C that are abundantly found in squash.

When you're online, mosey over to the fruit market's Instagram, where Harla posted a recipe for Butternut Squash Chips, which sounds better than Delicata skins to me! If you really want to eat the whole thing, scrub a Delicata thoroughly under running water, cut in half, scoop the seeds and lightly oil the skin. Drizzle a little oil or butter over the flesh if desired, and roast at 450 for about 40 minutes. Delicata is also known as sweet potato squash or peanut squash.

Hopefully we'll see two of my favorite fall anomalies this month: celery trees and brussels sprouts trees. Of course they're not really trees at all, just outsize examples of those veggies. Brussels sprouts grow on a tall stalk, and this time of year, local growers harvest and sell the whole stalk. Celery trees are the most fantastic, intensely celery-flavored local celery you're likely to eat, and you'll probably have to chop it down to fit it in your fridge.

Going, going, gone, will soon be the local cucumbers, hot and sweet peppers and beans. Tomatoes often linger well into September, and this month we'll continue to enjoy locally grown summer squashes, carrots, lettuces, cabbage, broccoli, onions, potatoes and cauliflower. Root veggies like beets, parsnips, turnips and rutabagas come roaring back, and it's always local herb and mushroom season, thanks to indoor cultivation. This is prime time for locally grown plums and pluots, and also for California specialties like artichokes, figs and persimmons.

We'll continue to have locally grown peaches and nectarines, as long as sweet, juicy ones are available. September is delicious! Let's eat our way through it, without FOMO! Next month it's Pumpkin Patch time, with literally tons of pumpkins for cooking, carving and admiring. As always, we'll be open into the first few days of November.

A few nights ago, I was scrolling through my photographs of last year's fall season, and I realized that I'd taken nearly 100 pictures of the same grove of maple trees, because their color was so spectacular. Each day the yellows deepened, the purples became more burnished, and the oranges and reds glowed more intensely. I photographed them day after day, afraid that one day the rain would come and ruin the show, and I'd have missed out on what could've been "the best" day.

The last photo in the series showed the branches, like bare ribs of an umbrella, the ground fringed with duff colored leaf debris, and I realized that all the photos showed the best day, each and every one. Enjoy September; it's beautiful, delicious, fleeting.

Fruitfully Yours,

KARIN POAGE

THE GRAPEVINE BACKPAGE

SAVORY ZUCCHINI BREAD WITH HERBS

—This is a savory zucchini bread, not a sweet one, shared by my friend Binky who won a ribbon at the Evergreen State Fair with this!

3 cups flour
4 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1 cup coarsely shredded zucchini
2 tablespoons minced garlic
3 tablespoons chopped parsley
2 teaspoons dill weed
2 eggs
1 cup low fat buttermilk
4 tablespoons melted butter

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, salt and baking soda. Add the zucchini and toss to coat shreds. Add the garlic, parsley and dillweed.

In a separate bowl, blend the eggs, buttermilk and melted butter.

Add the wet ingredients to the flour/zucchini mixture and mix just until dry ingredients are moistened, batter will be lumpy. Pour into a greased 9x5" loaf pan and bake in a preheated oven at 350 for 55-60 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into loaf comes out clean. Cool in pan on wire rack 5-10 minute, remove bread from pan and continue cooling on rack until cool.

FRESH GINGER GINGERBREAD

—Recipe from King Arthur Flour. If you want to use all purpose flour, decrease amount to 2 cups flour.

2 1/4 cups whole wheat flour
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons freshly grated ginger
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon cloves
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1/2 cup unsalted butter, melted
3/4 cup molasses
1/4 cup water
1 large egg
1 cup buttermilk
Preheat oven to 350

Grease and flour a 9" square pan.

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, soda, salt, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg. Melt butter in a heatproof container, add molasses to butter and pour over dry ingredients and mix until just moistened.

Add water to batter, stirring until incorporated. Whisk egg and buttermilk together and stir into batter. Pour batter into prepared pan and bake at 350 30-35 minutes or until cake tests done.

LOADED BAKED POTATO CASSEROLE

—Recipe from Basin Gold Potatoes, serves 8.

8 whole red potatoes, (not baby size) cut into thirds
1/4 cup sour cream
1/4 cup milk
1/4 cup cream cheese
1/4 cup melted butter
3 cups shredded Cheddar cheese
6 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled
1/2 cup chopped green onion tops
salt & pepper

Rinse potatoes and cut into thirds, leaving skin on. Cook in boiling, salted water until potatoes are tender. Drain, transfer to a 9 x 13" baking dish and mash potatoes (skins on) with a potato masher. Add sour cream, milk, cream cheese and melted butter, half the Cheddar, and continue mashing until ingredients are incorporated. Season with salt and pepper, stir in bacon and spread the potato mixture evenly in the baking dish. Top with the remaining cheddar and bake at 350 until cheese is melted and potato mixture is heated through. Sprinkle green onions on top and serve.

THAI CHICKEN AND FIG SALAD

—Recipe from California Figs. Serves 6.

6 tablespoons fresh lime juice
1/4 cup honey
1 tablespoon light soy sauce
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
2 teaspoons finely minced fresh ginger
2 cups cooled, cooked chicken, shredded
1 cup dried figs, stemmed, cut into slivers
2 green onions, thinly sliced
1/4 cup chopped fresh mint
2 cups julienned cantaloupe
2 cups julienned sweet red pepper
2 cups julienned cucumber
6 cups salad greens

Combine lime juice, honey, soy sauce, pepper flakes and minced ginger. Mix well. Add chicken, figs, green onions and mint. Toss to coat. Refrigerate 1 hour.

When ready to serve, distribute greens over 6 individual serving plates. Combine cantaloupe, sweet pepper and cucumber and toss gently but thoroughly with refrigerated chicken mixture. Spoon chicken mixture over individual salad plates and serve immediately.

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